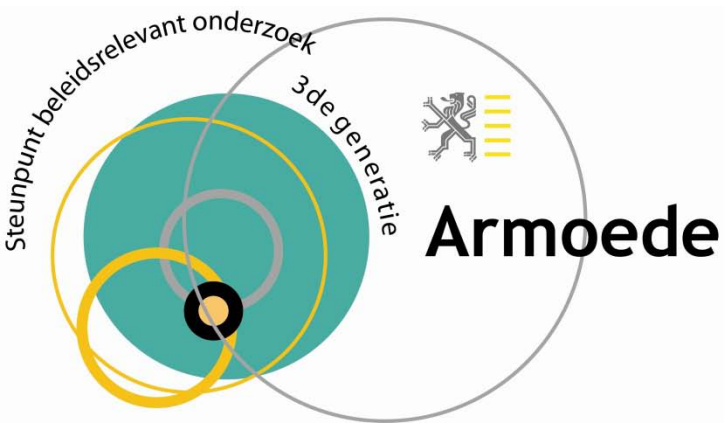


Assessing the potential of social innovation for structural poverty reduction

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Context: social innovation policy

- research of Flemish Policy Research Center on Poverty
 - Report of Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA, 2010): social innovation as solution to economic crisis and societal challenges
 - 'Renewed Social Agenda' (2008): social correction on Lisbon Agenda
 - Flemish social innovation policy: combination of promotion of innovation by civil society and 'social sector' and anti-poverty policies

Research question

- Social innovation policies tend to focus on (small) individual ‘projects’
 - risk of moving away from structural anti-poverty policy and ‘experimenting with the poor’
 - hence our research question: what are factors determining potential of social innovation for tackling poverty and social exclusion in structural way?

Three layers of poverty reduction

1. Non-structural: caring for the poor without changing their position in society
2. Structural on individual level: countering particular forms of social exclusions for particular people
3. Structural on systemic level: addressing root causes of poverty and stopping the (re)production of poverty on a societal level

4 factors

1. Relation to structural causes of poverty

Including: dependence on labor market position for income, ethnic discrimination, gender domination, etc.

<-> as opposed to a focus on individual behaviour: “improving the behavior of the poor rather than in any profound redistribution of resources” (Holman, 1976, p. 270)

2. Relation to solidarity with the poor.

“poverty is not eliminated even when society has sufficient affluence to achieve this end, for it exists for reasons other than a total lack of resources” (Holman, 1976, p. 202)

Focus on awareness raising, politicization, and mobilization around the problem, as opposed to reinforcing stereotypes or depoliticizing the issue.

4 factors

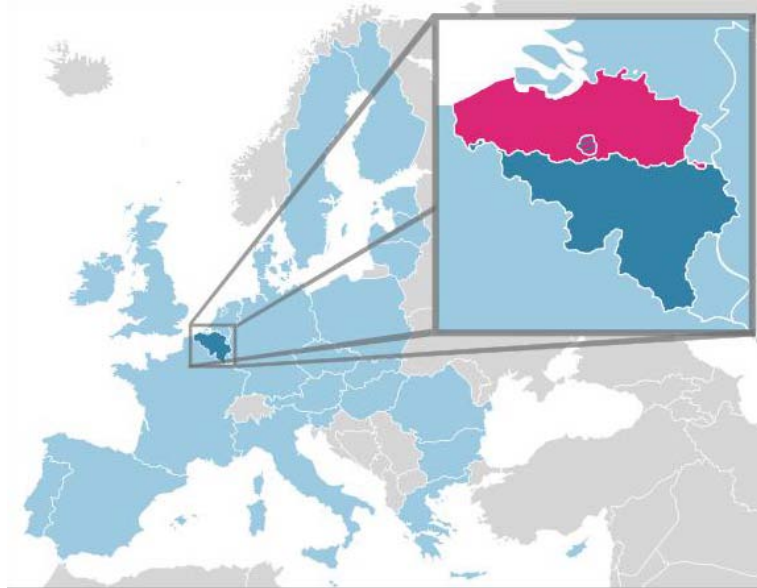
3. Empowerment or the relation to the position of the poor.

→ Attention for: power relations, participation vs. exclusion, self-determination vs. dependency, etc.

4. Weight of impact: organizational scale, geographically even access, institutionalization...

→ Related factor: Interaction with welfare state

Case: Food banks



- Gave packages to 122.000 individuals in 2012
- Organized in National federation, provincial warehouses and local handout centers.
- collect food from food industry and EU program for agricultural leftovers.

Methodology :

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Survey data (68 handout centers)

From two studies, see:

- Ghys, T. (2012).
- Geerts, A. , Ghys, T., Dierckx, D. (2013)

Interview quotes

“the volunteers that work here are not very sensitive people. We have to queue up outside, also in the winter, then you stand there freezing” (55 year old client).

“We assume that people have to be happy with what they get, also if they get the same EU-products week after week, and also when products are over their due date” (volunteer).

We hope to have illustrated the importance of looking beyond how successful social innovation is in meeting its own goal, and to relate the analysis to the specific factors relevant to the field in which social transformation is desired

Thank you for your attention

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